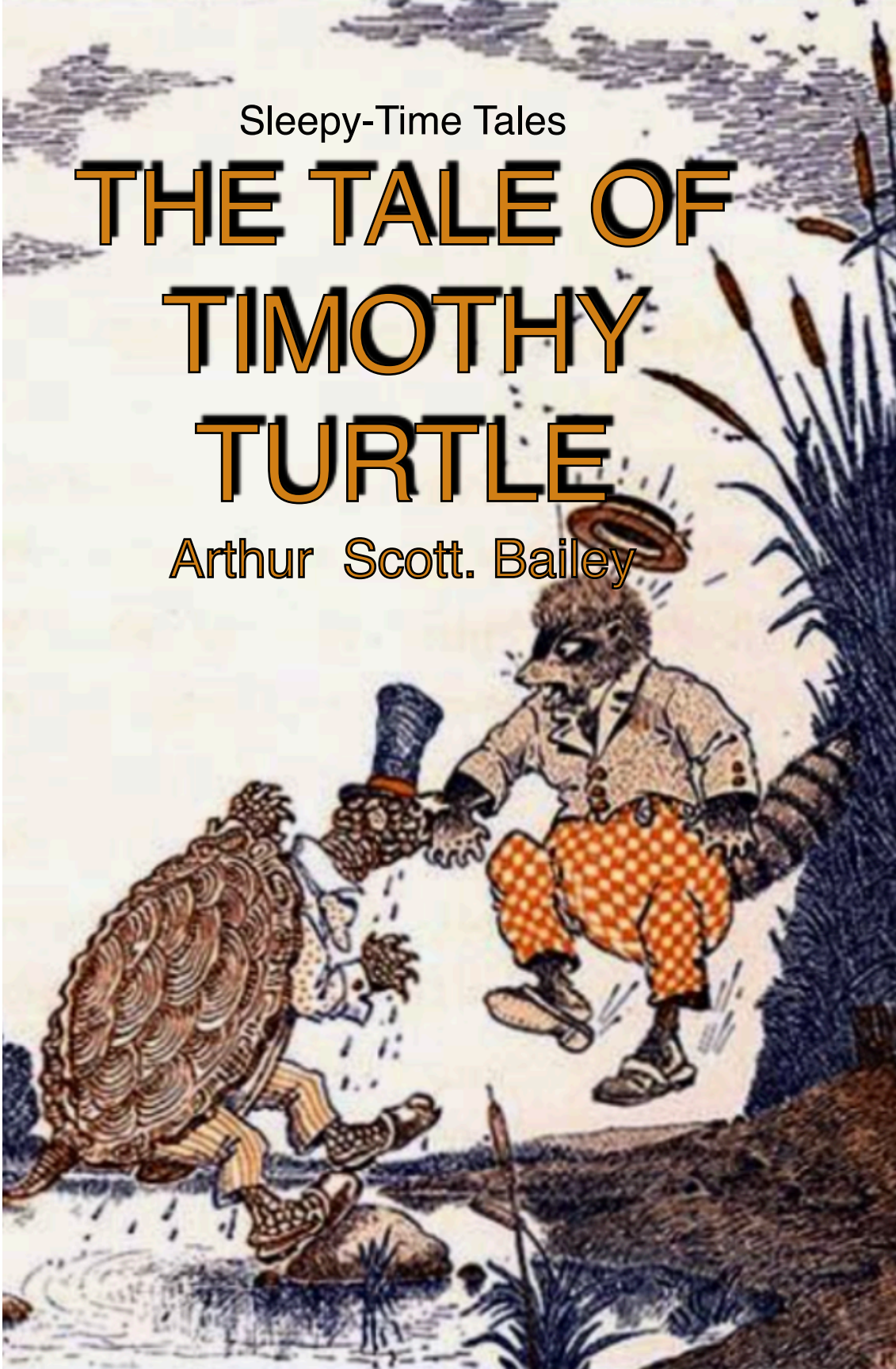
Sleepy-Time Tales

THE TALE OF TIMOTHY TURTLE

Arthur Scott. Bailey



Gunston & The Book Bunnies

The Gunston Trust

Sleepy-Time Tales

THE TALE OF TIMOTHY TURTLE

Arthur Scott Bailey

Illustrated by Harry L. Smith

The Gunston Trust
Nonviolence
In Children's Literature

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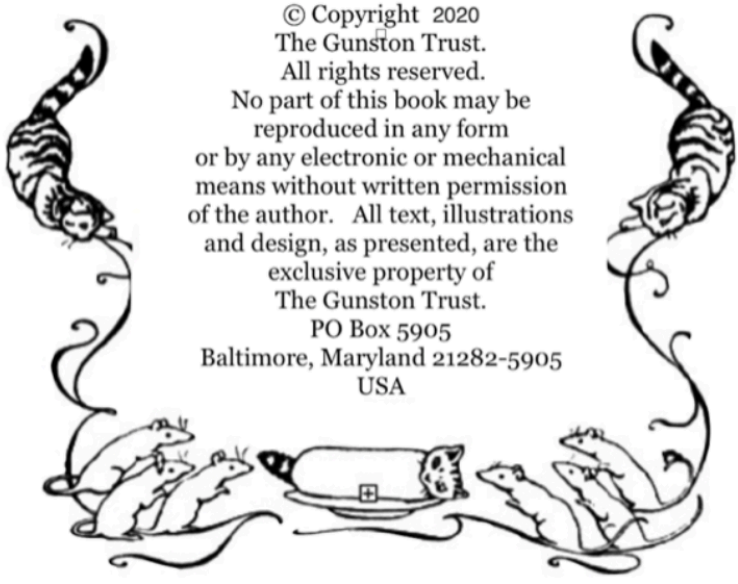

Timothy was going through the queerest motions.

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Timothy was going through the queerest motions.
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"Let Me In!" said Timothy to Mr. Frog.

Timothy began to climb the steep bluff.

"Let me go!" Fatty Coon shrieked.

THE TALE OF TIMOTHY TURTLE

I
A FAMOUS BITER

That black rascal, Mr. Crow, was not the oldest dweller in Pleasant Valley. There was another elderly gentleman who had spent more summers—and a great many more winters—under the shadow of Blue Mountain than he.

All the wild folk knew this person by the name of Timothy Turtle. And if they didn't see him so often as Mr. Crow it was because he spent much of his time on the muddy bottom of Black Creek. Besides, he never flapped his way through the air to Farmer

Green's cornfield, in plain sight of everyone who happened to look up at the sky.

On the contrary, Mr. Timothy Turtle seldom wandered far from the banks of the creek—for the best of reasons. He was anything but a fast walker. In fact, one might say that he waddled, or even crawled, rather than walked. But in the water he was quite a different creature. By means of his webbed feet he could swim as easily as Mr. Crow could fly. And he could stay at the bottom of Black Creek a surprisingly long time before he came up for a breath of air. Indeed, Mr. Crow sometimes remarked that he would be just as well pleased if Timothy Turtle buried himself in the mud beneath the water and never came up again!

Such a speech was enough to show that Mr. Crow was not fond of Timothy Turtle. Perhaps Mr. Crow disliked to have a neighbor who was older than he. But Mr. Crow himself always laughed at such a suggestion.

"The trouble is——" he would say—"the trouble is, Timothy Turtle is too grumpy. Now, I'm old. But I

claim that that's no reason why I shouldn't be pleasant." And then he would laugh—somewhat harshly—just to show that he knew how.

There was a good deal of truth in what Mr. Crow said. Timothy Turtle was grumpy. But it was not old age that made him so. He had been like that all his life. There never was a time when he Wasn't snappish, when he wouldn't rather bite a body than not.

And that was the reason why he had not more friends. To be sure, many people knew him. But usually they took good care not to get too near him.

For Timothy Turtle had a most unpleasant way of shooting out his long neck from under his shell and seizing a person in his powerful jaws. In spite of his great age he was quick as a flash. And one had to step lively to escape him.

If Timothy had bitten you just for an instant, and then stopped, this trick of his wouldn't have been so disagreeable. But he was not content with a mere nip. When he had hold of you he never wanted to let

you go. And it was no joke getting away, once you found yourself caught by him.

As for Timothy Turtle, he never could understand why his neighbors objected to this little trick of his. He always said that it was more fun than almost anything else he could think of. And it is true that he never seemed so happy as he did when he had caught some careless person and was biting him without mercy.

"Anybody that wants to may bite me," Timothy used to declare. But perhaps he never stopped to think that one might almost as well bite a rock as his hard shell. And anybody might better chew a piece of leather than try to take a mouthful out of his legs, or his neck, or his head.

So no one paid any heed to Timothy Turtle's kind offer. Even Peter Mink, who was himself overfond of biting people, wisely let Mr. Turtle alone.

There is no doubt that it was the safer way.

II
AN OLD-TIMER

It was pleasant for Timothy Turtle that he lived in Black Creek, for he was very fond of fishing. If he had happened to make his home among the rocks on the top of Blue Mountain he would have had to travel a long way to find even a trout stream. But in Black Creek there were fish right in his dooryard, one may say.

It was lucky for him, too, that he liked fish to eat. And whenever he wanted a change of food the creek was a good place in which to find a frog, or perhaps a foolish duckling who had not learned to be careful.

It was no wonder that all the mother birds in the neighborhood used to warn their children to beware of

Timothy Turtle. Did not Long Bill Wren, who lived among the reeds on the bank of Black Creek, have a narrow escape when he was only a few weeks old?

He had just learned to fly. And although his mother had told him not to leave the bank, he disobeyed her. When she was not watching him he sailed over the water for the first time in his life and alighted on a flat object on top of a rock.

Bill supposed it was a stone that he was sitting on. And he felt so proud of what he had done that he cried, "Look! Oh, look!"

His poor mother was dreadfully frightened when she saw him.

"Come back!" she shrieked. "You're in great danger!"

So Bill flew back to the bank as fast as he could go.

"What have I told you about Timothy Turtle?" his mother asked him sharply.

"You've said to keep away from him, or he might eat me," young Bill faltered.

"Exactly!" his mother cried. "And the moment I glance away, here you go and sit right on his back! It's a wonder you're alive."

Her son hung his head. And never again did he pick out a perch until he was sure it wasn't old Mr. Turtle.

When he was older, and had children of his own, Long Bill often remarked that it was too bad Mr. Turtle didn't live in some other place. "He makes my wife so nervous!" he used to exclaim. "With a new brood of at least a half-dozen youngsters to take care of every summer one has to watch sharp for Mr. Turtle whenever the children play near the water." And Long Bill always took pains to tell his children of his own adventure with Timothy Turtle and warn them not to make such a mistake.

"Luckily I sat exactly in the center of Mr. Turtle's shell, so he couldn't reach me," Long Bill was explaining to his family one day. "But if I had happened to perch on his head I certainly wouldn't be here now."

"Oh, Mr. Turtle is too slow to catch me," one of the youngsters boasted. "I saw him on the bank to-day; and he only crawled."

"Ah! You don't know him," Long Bill Wren replied. "When he wants to, he can stand up on his hind legs as quick as a wink. And he can dart his head out just like a snake."

"Ugh!" Long Bill's small son shivered as he spoke. "I wish Mr. Turtle would go away from our creek."

"He thinks it's his creek," Long Bill Wren observed. "He has lived in it years and years and years. We'll have to get on with him as best we can, for there's no doubt that Timothy Turtle is here to stay."

III
TIMOTHY'S GRUDGE

Sometimes Fatty Coon liked a taste of fresh fish, just by way of a change from Farmer Green's corn, and blackberries, wild grapes, bugs—and all the other dainties on which he dined.

So it happened that one day he visited Black Creek, where he crouched near the water with the hope that some silly fish would swim within reach of his sharp claws.

For a long time he waited patiently. And at last, to his great joy, a young pickerel nosed his way through the shallow water in front of him.

The newcomer was hunting flies. And he did not notice the eager fisherman.

Fatty Coon waited until just the right moment. And then one of his paws darted suddenly into the water.

But instead of Fatty Coon catching the pickerel, someone else caught Fatty Coon.

His captor was no less a person than Timothy Turtle himself, who had been buried all this time in the mud almost under Fatty Coon's nose. That is, his body was buried. His head and neck he had left free, so that he might strike at a fish when one came his way. But he had seen something else that took his fancy. When Fatty's paw scooped into the water Timothy Turtle just had to grab it.

"Let me go!" Fatty Coon shrieked, for Mr. Turtle's cruel jaws hurt him terribly.

"Why, this is fun!" Timothy Turtle muttered thickly, as he took a firmer hold on Fatty's paw. "Besides, I've been wanting to talk with you for a long time."

"Then you'd better let me go," Fatty groaned, "because you can't talk well with your mouth full."

"Let me go!" Fatty Coon shrieked.

"I can say all I need to," Timothy Turtle grunted. "And I know that if I dropped your paw you'd run off."

"Hurry, then!" Fatty Coon begged him piteously.

"Hurry and tell me what you have to say. And please talk fast!"

Timothy Turtle almost smiled.

"Am I hurting you?" he inquired.

"Yes, you are!" cried Fatty Coon.

"Good!" Mr. Turtle snorted. "I meant to, because I've a grudge against you."

Fatty Coon couldn't think what he meant.

"I've never done a thing to you," he declared.

"Perhaps not!" Timothy Turtle admitted. "But you stole Mrs. Turtle's eggs—twenty-seven of them—and you can't deny it."

Now, it was true—what Timothy Turtle said. Hidden among the reeds one day, Fatty Coon had watched Mrs. Turtle bury her eggs in the sand, to hatch. And when she had gone he had crept out from his hiding-place, dug up her precious, round, white treasures, and eaten them, every one.

Well, Fatty Coon dropped his head in front of Mr. Turtle. He was somewhat ashamed, and frightened, too. And he did not like to look into Timothy Turtle's blinking eyes. "How did you know?" he asked Mr. Turtle.

"Mrs. Turtle told me," said Timothy, shifting his hold slightly, for a better one.

"How did the old lady know who took her eggs?" Fatty persisted.

"Mr. Crow saw everything that happened—and don't you call my wife an old lady!" Timothy Turtle spluttered.

"Very well! She's a young one, of course," Fatty said hastily. "But I don't know how I've harmed you."

"You don't, eh?" Timothy Turtle snarled. "Then I'll explain. I meant to have those eggs myself, young man!"

IV
A TIGHT SQUEEZE

Timothy Turtle's remark was most surprising. It almost took Fatty Coon's breath away. And for a moment or two he even forgot the pain in his paw.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that you like turtles' eggs!"

"Do I?" said Timothy. "There's no better treat, in my opinion, than a tender young egg, especially if it's well mixed with sand. And, of course, twenty-seven of them are twenty-seven times as good."

"I'm sorry——" Fatty told him—"I'm sorry that I ever touched the old—I mean the young—lady's eggs.

And now that you've almost bitten my paw in two, please—good Mr. Turtle—let me go!"

But good Mr. Turtle had no notion of freeing his prisoner.

"Not yet!" he snapped. "I'm going to bite you twenty-seven times as long, and twenty-seven times as hard—if I can."

"But it was only a mistake!" Fatty Coon moaned.

"I never knew you wanted those eggs yourself."

"Take care" said Timothy Turtle sternly—"take care that you never make such a mistake again."

"Don't do that!" Fatty Coon suddenly cried.

"Don't do what?" was Mr. Turtle's testy reply.

"Don't pull on my leg!" Fatty Coon pleaded. "You'll have me in the water in another moment, and I'll get wet, and my mother won't like it a bit."

But Timothy Turtle paid no heed to Fatty Coon's objections.

"Certainly I'll pull you into the creek," he declared. "I'm going to take you out where the water's deep, and drag you down, down, down to the very

bottom. We'll have lots of fun burying ourselves in the mud. And I venture to say that you'll like it so well down there that you'll never want to come up again."

If Fatty Coon was frightened before, now he was terrified almost out of his wits. And he began to claw frantically at Timothy Turtle's head.

Luckily he had three free paws. And of these he made good use. In the shallows near the bank he struggled with all his might. And soon the water was churned into a muddy pool.

Fatty never knew exactly how he succeeded in breaking loose from Mr. Turtle.

Anyhow, he found himself free at last; and he lost no time in scrambling up the bank to safety.

Afterward Timothy Turtle always complained that Fatty Coon didn't "fight fair."

"He gouges," Timothy would explain. "He'd just as soon stick one of his claws into your eye as not. And I claim that's something no real gentleman will do."

Now, Fatty did not leave Black Creek at once, after his adventure with Timothy Turtle. He paused for a time, to squat on the bank and nurse his injured paw. While he lingered there he happened to glance up. And whom should he see, sitting motionless in a tree near-by, but that old rascal, Mr. Crow!

"Oh! Naughty, naughty!" Mr. Crow cawed in a mocking voice. "You've been fighting."

"It's all your fault," Fatty growled. "If you'd minded your own affairs Timothy Turtle would never have known anything about those eggs."

"Bless your heart!" old Mr. Crow cried. "Timothy Turtle would have seized you just the same, if you'd never touched his wife's eggs. You don't know him as well as I do."

"Perhaps not!" Fatty Coon replied. "And what's more, I don't want to. I never want to see Timothy Turtle again."

Old Mr. Crow laughed merrily at that speech. But Fatty Coon only turned his back on him.

He was in no mood for laughter.

V
MR. TURTLE'S MISTAKE

Mr. Crow was in no hurry to leave Black Creek. And after Fatty Coon had limped away the old gentleman still sat in the tree which hung over the water. He hoped that Timothy Turtle would crawl out upon the bank and growl about Fatty.

The old black rascal was not disappointed. Fatty Coon had not been gone long when Timothy Turtle dragged himself out of the creek and stretched himself upon the sand in the warm sunshine.

"How's your eye?" Mr. Crow asked him hoarsely.

"It's feeling better; but it's a wonder

that I can see with it at all," Timothy Turtle grumbled.

"If I ever get hold of that fat young fellow again I'll pull him under the water before he knows what's happened to him. He doesn't fight fair."

Old Mr. Crow chuckled.

"You'll never have another chance to show him the right way," he remarked. "He won't come near this creek, or my name's not—ahem—Mr. Crow."

"What's your first name?" Timothy Turtle inquired, as he stared unpleasantly at the speaker.

"Never mind!" said the other. "Mr. Crow will do, if you want to attract my attention."

Timothy Turtle frowned.

"I don't want to," he retorted. "The fact is, I'd rather be alone. I don't care to have strangers peeping down at me when I'm enjoying a sun-bath."

"But I like to look at you," old Mr. Crow assured him solemnly. "You make me think of somebody I've known for a good many years."

"Ah! An old friend!" Timothy exclaimed.

"Well—not a friend, exactly," Mr. Crow explained. "He lives in the South, where I spend the winters. You look like him, in many ways."

"And his name?" Timothy Turtle said.

"Mr. Alligator!" Timothy Turtle grunted.

"Humph!" he said. "I've never heard of him."

"That's not strange," old Mr. Crow told him. "He stays all the time in the South and you stay all the time in the North. You couldn't very well meet, you see."

"Your tail is a good deal like his," Mr. Crow continued. "And when you walk you have a trick of raising yourself sometimes on your hind legs, with your head and tail stretched out—a trick that reminds me of him."

For once Timothy seemed pleased.

"Anything else?" he demanded, with something that was almost like a smile. Unfortunately, he had passed so many years with a constant frown on his face that smiling actually hurt him.

"Why, yes! There is something else," old Mr. Crow went on. "You and he have the same way of snapping at things."

There was no doubt, now, that Timothy Turtle was gratified.

"He must be a fine bird—this Mr. Alligator!" he exclaimed.

Old Mr. Crow spluttered. And he had to hang on tight to save himself from tumbling off his perch.

A bird! Timothy Turtle thought that Mr. Alligator was a bird!

The mistake was so amusing that Mr. Crow wanted to laugh. But he knew that would never do—if he wanted any more fun with Timothy Turtle.

So he pretended to cough. And he wrapped his muffler more snugly about his neck, remarking that there was a cold wind that day, even though the sun was warm.

VI
MR. CROW'S KIND OFFER

I suppose," Timothy Turtle said to his young friend, old Mr. Crow. "I suppose Mr. Alligator is a fine flier."

"He's a very powerful fellow," old Mr. Crow replied with a sly smile.

"Did you ever try to follow him?" Timothy wanted to know.

Mr. Crow shook his head.

"No!" he answered. "I shouldn't want to do that, because one never could tell when he might take a notion to jump into the water."

"Oh! Then he can swim, can he?"

"Certainly!" Mr. Crow assured him.

"Then that's another way in which he's like me!" Timothy Turtle cried. "And if I could only fly, I'd be still more like him."

"Why don't you learn?" Mr. Crow suggested wickedly.

"I'm too old," Timothy sighed.

"Not at all!" Mr. Crow hastened to assure him. "One can never be too old to try a thing."

But Timothy Turtle replied that even if he was young enough to attempt such a feat as flying, he hadn't the least idea of the way to go about it.

Old Mr. Crow was most helpful.

"I'll tell you what you ought to do," he advised. "You swim down the creek as far as the big bluff. And it will be a simple matter for you to climb up to the top of the bluff and jump off the rock that hangs high up over the water."

Timothy Turtle looked far from happy at that suggestion.

"I shouldn't care to do that," he said.

Timothy was going through the queerest motions.

"Why not?" Mr. Crow asked him. "You know there's only one way of flying, and that's through the air."

"I might fall," Timothy objected.

"What if you did?" said Mr. Crow glibly. "You'd only fall into the water. And everybody agrees that you're a fine swimmer.... You aren't afraid of getting your feet wet, are you?" And he laughed loudly at his own joke.

For some reason Timothy lost his temper. Perhaps he thought Mr. Crow was disrespectful to his elders.

"Look here, young man!" he snapped, glaring angrily at old Mr. Crow. "If you're laughing at me, I'll invite you to drop down here and stand on the end of my nose."

Old Mr. Crow grew sober at once. The mere thought of perching himself in so dangerous a place was enough to put a quick end to his noisy haw-haws.

"My dear sir!" he cried. "I wouldn't dream of standing on the nose of a fine old gentleman like you. No indeedy! My manners are too good for that."

Timothy Turtle said bluntly that he had always been told that Mr. Crow was the rudest person in all Pleasant Valley—unless it was Mr. Crow's boisterous cousin, Jasper Jay.

When he heard that, Mr. Crow pretended to wipe a tear away from each of his eyes.

"I've always been misunderstood," he declared mournfully. "I'm really a kind-hearted soul. And just to prove to you that I want to be helpful, I'll meet you at the bluff any time you say, and tell you exactly what to do if you want to learn to fly."

Timothy Turtle seemed to think that the chance was too good a one to lose.

"I accept your offer," he shouted. "And I'll start downstream this very moment."

VII
LEARNING TO FLY

Timothy Turtle reached the overhanging bluff in a surprisingly short time. But it must be remembered that he did not walk there on land, but swam down Black Creek with the current. When he crawled out upon the bank he was glad to see that old Mr. Crow was waiting for him, on a pine stump that stood near the water.

He failed utterly to notice that Mr. Crow was not alone. Hidden in all sorts of places were as many as a dozen of Mr. Crow's friends. For the old gentleman had invited his cousin, Jasper Jay, to come to the bluff "to enjoy the fun," as he expressed it.

"But don't let Timothy Turtle see you!" Mr. Crow had warned Jasper. "At least, don't let him know you're there until after he has jumped off the big rock."
Jasper Jay had given his solemn promise.

"And don't let him hear you, either," Mr. Crow had said. And Jasper had agreed to that, too, although he said that it might be a hard thing to do.

Well, Timothy Turtle crawled out upon the bank and took a long look at the high bluff above him, from which the great rock hung over the water of the creek.

"I believe——" he said to old Mr. Crow—"I believe I'd better wait till to-morrow before I try to fly. I've just had a long swim, you know. And I want to feel fresh when I take my first lesson."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "Everything's all ready. You're not too tired, are you, to climb to the top of the bluff?"

"No," Timothy Turtle admitted.

"Then you've no reason for waiting," Mr. Crow assured him. "Coming down will be much easier than going up."

Timothy began to climb the steep bluff.

"I dare say that's true," Timothy remarked. "But I don't quite like to think about this business of flying."

"Then you certainly ought not to wait any longer," Mr. Crow urged him. "For the longer you wait the more time you'll have to think."

That appeared to Timothy Turtle to be a good bit of advice. And yet he still seemed uneasy.

"There's just one thing that troubles me," he confessed. "After I've jumped from the rock I might find that I couldn't fly. And I'd get a bad fall."

"But you'd land in the water," Mr. Crow reminded him. "And that would be much better than falling on the land.... I don't need to tell you," he added, "that water is soft. And you're a fine swimmer."

So Timothy Turtle yielded. And thereupon he began to drag himself up the steep bluff.

It seemed to Mr. Crow that he had never known anybody to walk so slowly. But then, of course, he was in a hurry to see the fun. And it couldn't really begin until Mr. Turtle should reach the big rock and take the leap that Mr. Crow had suggested to him.

Jasper Jay and the rowdies he had brought with him stirred impatiently. And Jasper said aloud to one of them:

"What an old slow-poke he is!"

"What's that!" Timothy Turtle inquired, as he stopped and looked around at Mr. Crow.

"I didn't speak," Mr. Crow told him.

Timothy glared at his teacher for a few moments. And Mr. Crow began to think that Jasper Jay had spoiled the fun. But at last Timothy Turtle plodded on. And when his back was turned old Mr. Crow flew over to the place where Jasper Jay was hidden and whispered to him that he had better keep still or there would be trouble for him.

VIII
TURNING TURTLE

So Timothy Turtle struggled up the steep face of the bluff. And as he neared the top Mr. Crow began to hop up and down upon the old pine stump. He was almost bursting with silent laughter. But he succeeded in keeping quiet. And now and then he made threatening motions toward Jasper Jay and his friends, who stuck their heads from behind limbs of trees and hummocks and bushes, lest they miss any of the fun.

Once on top of the great rock that capped the bluff and hung out over the creek, Timothy Turtle clung

there and peered down at the gently flowing water below.

"What a long way it is down there!" he called to Mr. Crow.

"Don't think about that!" Mr. Crow cautioned him.

"Is this the way Mr. Alligator learned to fly?" Timothy Turtle demanded.

"Don't think about him!" Mr. Crow shouted. "Just jump out as far as you can!"

"I believe I don't care to fly to-day," Timothy Turtle faltered, drawing back from the edge of the rock.

"I——I'll wait till some other time. You know, I'm older than you are."

"Tut, tut!" said Mr. Crow. "When I'm your age I shall still be flying as well as I do now. It's nothing, when you know how. Nothing at all!"

Urged by Mr. Crow, Timothy Turtle once more crept to the very edge of the cliff and stretched his neck out as far as he could, to gaze down at the black water. And at last, after making several false starts

and drawing back to a place of safety, he stood up on his hind legs, shut his eyes, and hopped off into space.

Now, the moment Timothy Turtle leaped from the top of the bluff a deafening squawk broke the silence. Old Mr. Crow cawed as loud as he knew how. But the racket he made was as nothing compared with the uproar of Jasper Jay and the noisy crew he had brought with him. They squalled with delight as Timothy Turtle plunged through the air like a stone. And when he landed upside down in the creek, striking the water with a great splash, the whole company shrieked louder than ever.

"Ha! ha! ha!" Mr. Crow cried, holding his sides and rocking backwards and forwards upon the old stump.

"Jay! jay! jay!" Jasper and his friends bawled, hopping up and down and cutting capers in the air.

As for Timothy Turtle, he made no sound at all. And neither did he make the slightest motion. The current of Black Creek caught him and bore him away down the stream. But at last he managed to paddle

ashore. And he pulled himself slowly out of the water, and lay upon the sand and groaned.

Mr. Crow and his cronies gathered quickly about him.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Crow inquired. "Don't you like flying?"

It was some time before Timothy could answer.

"I've had an awful fall," he moaned finally.

"Where are you hurt?" Mr. Crow asked him.

"Everywhere!" Timothy Turtle told him. "I thought you said that water was soft to fall into."

"Well, isn't it?"

"It certainly is not," Timothy Turtle declared. "I believe there's nothing harder in the whole world.... I've heard, sir, that you are very wise. But for once, anyhow, you've made a great mistake."

Old Mr. Crow coughed—and winked at his friends. "The trouble was"—he explained—"the trouble was, you lost your balance and landed in the creek upside down. And of course you couldn't fly in that position. It's what's called 'turning turtle,'" he added,

"and I might have known—if I had stopped to think—that you'd be sure to do it."

"Well," said Timothy Turtle, drawing a long breath, "I'll tell you right now that I'll never, never, turn turtle again."

IX
A PLEASURE TRIP

Almost always the wild folk in Pleasant Valley knew that if they wanted to see Timothy Turtle they could find him somewhere in Black Creek. But once in a great while he liked to go on what he called "an excursion." By that he meant a pleasure trip to some spot not too far away—never outside of Pleasant Valley.

Nobody meeting Timothy Turtle on one of those journeys would have suspected that he was bent on pleasure. Or at least, nobody would have supposed that Mr. Turtle had found what he was looking for. Certainly if he was hunting for fun, he never looked as if he had discovered any. For no smile showed itself upon his face. Instead, he met every one with a frown. And if a

body gave him a cheery "Good morning," just as likely as not Timothy would answer with a grunt, and pass on.

Naturally, when Timothy Turtle arrived anywhere and told people that he expected to spend a few days among them they did not feel any great joy at the news. On the contrary, they were quite likely to say to one another, "I hope he won't stop long," or "He looks more grumpy than ever." And some would even remark that they wished Timothy Turtle would go home and stay there.

So no one of the Beaver colony was glad when Timothy appeared in their pond one day and explained that he intended to be in the neighborhood at least a week. In the first place, the Beavers, as a whole, were a busy, cheerful family, who did not like disagreeable folk for company. And in the second place, they were spry workers; and they had little use for anybody as slow as Timothy Turtle, who never did any work at all. It is no wonder, then, that as soon as the news of Timothy's coming spread up and down and across the

pond, the busy Beavers stopped their work and said things about the crusty outsider who had forced himself upon them. And almost everybody went to call upon Grandaddy Beaver and asked him what he thought ought to be done.

Now, Grandaddy was a good old soul. And he told the hot-headed younger members of the colony to keep cool, which seems a simple thing for them to have done, swimming about as they were in the icy water, which flowed down from springs on the side of Blue Mountain.

"Timothy Turtle has been here before," Grandaddy Beaver announced. "I can remember my great-grandfather's telling me about his passing two whole weeks in our pond. And though everybody wished he would leave, he never harmed anybody, because people kept out of his way."

"Well, he ought to work while he's here," said a brisk gentleman, tugging at his mustache.

"Timothy Turtle will never lift his hand to do a single stroke of work," said old Grandaddy Beaver.

"He has already spent a long life without working. And he'll be lazy if he lives to be a hundred years old—or even a hundred and fifty."

Now, a young chap called Brownie Beaver heard all this, as he stood in Grandaddy's doorway and peeped inside the house. And he thought it was a shame that somebody couldn't make Timothy Turtle mend his ways. To Brownie Bearer it seemed that Timothy Turtle was old enough to behave himself.

X
A WARNING

Timothy Turtle's visit at the beaver pond was just like all of his outings. Wherever he went he was so disagreeable and snappish that there wasn't a single person in the whole village that didn't wish Timothy had stayed away from that place.

He was forever grumbling, complaining that the fishing was poor in the pond. And as for frogs, he declared that he hadn't seen even one.

"Why anybody wants to live here is more than I can understand." That was what Timothy Turtle told everyone he met. And of course it was a poor way of making himself welcome.

"Why do you come here, if you don't like our pond?" people asked him.

"It's a change for me," was Timothy's reply. "After I've spent a week with you I'll be pretty glad to get back home again. And I won't want to go on another excursion for a whole year—or maybe two.

"It's twenty years since I was here before. And I sha'n't care to come again for forty, at least."

Now, such dreadfully rude remarks hurt the Beaver family's feelings. And when Timothy Turtle seized a fat lady by the tail one day and wouldn't let her go until sunset, her feelings were hurt most of all. She cried that she had never been so insulted in all her life.

Timothy Turtle merely said that she ought not to object. He explained that he had been giving her a rest —for of course she couldn't cut down a tree, nor work upon the dam that held the water in the pond, while he clung fast to her tail.

Well, this fat lady happened to be Brownie Beaver's mother. And after her disagreeable

experience with the stranger, Brownie made up his mind that he would make Timothy Turtle work. That was the worst punishment he could think of.

Whenever the members of the Beaver family were not sleeping, or eating, either they were gathering food by cutting down trees, or they were mending their dam.

The dam always had leaks here and there. And sooner or later every one of them had to be stopped, before it grew so big that the water would rush through it and tear a hole so great that the pond would be drained dry.

During his stay among the Beavers Timothy Turtle often crawled on top of the dam and stretched himself out and watched the Beavers at their task. He said that if there was one thing that he liked to see more than another it was "a gang of men working." But he complained that they ought to work in the daytime, when the sun was shining, because then it would have been "much pleasanter for him."

"Don't you want to help us?" asked the brisk fellow who had told Grandaddy Beaver that he thought Timothy Turtle ought to go to work.

That question actually made Timothy snort.

"Me work?" he snapped scornfully, as he glared at the speaker.

Everybody knew what he meant. And everybody knew how Timothy felt, too, when he edged along the dam and made a savage pass at the plump gentleman who had spoken to him.

Luckily the brisk Beaver jumped aside before Timothy Turtle's jaws closed on him. And he did not say another word to the stranger during the rest of his stay at the pond.

But Timothy Turtle became quite talkative. He stopped all he met—old and young both—and warned them that nobody need try to get him to work, for he never had worked, and he never intended to.

XI
ON THE BEAVER DAM

Timothy Turtle was so angry that he went about snapping at everybody and everything. And since the whole Beaver family kept carefully out of his way, he had to content himself with setting his jaws upon roots and sticks.

Now, the Beavers' dam was made of sticks and mud. So Timothy found plenty of chances to bite. And because he could not hurt the sticks, no matter how much he tried, nobody cared.

Really he acted in a most silly, surly fashion. Out of a corner of his eye Brownie Beaver watched Timothy Turtle closely. Brownie had not forgotten how Timothy seized his mother by the tail. And while he was helping his elders on the dam, at the same time he was trying to think of some way to outwit Timothy Turtle.

It happened that just at that time the dam needed a great deal of mending. There were so many holes to be filled that the Beavers worked all night long. And in spite of all their efforts they saw that even then a few leaks would have to go unmended. But they did not get snappish nor lose their tempers. They were not like Timothy Turtle. Though he slept a great part of the night, and waked up to watch the workers early in the morning, his temper was worse than ever.

He was paddling through the water close to the dam when Brownie Beaver called to him.

"You see that stick??" said Brownie, pointing to a stout piece of box elder that stuck out of the dam.

"I'm not blind," Timothy Turtle snarled back at him.

"Well, please don't bite it, anyhow!" Brownie Beaver begged him.

That was enough for Timothy Turtle. The mere fact that he thought somebody didn't want him to do a certain thing was sure to make him do it. So without saying another word he seized that stick in his

powerful jaws. And bracing his feet against the inner side of the dam, half in the water and half out, he pulled with all his strength.

Now and then he turned his beady eyes toward Brownie Beaver and frowned at him, as if to say, "Don't give me any orders, young fellow! I shall do just as I please; and nobody can stop me."

Timothy noticed that Brownie went to a number of the other workers and whispered to them. And when everyone to whom he spoke called to Timothy and asked him if he wouldn't just as soon let go of that stick and grab another one, that crusty old codger made up his mind that nobody should move him from that spot. He took an even firmer hold and tugged as if he meant to tear the whole dam down.

But the Beaver family knew that he couldn't do any damage. And as soon as it was light enough they all went home to take a nap, leaving Timothy Turtle to pull away to his heart's content.

XII
KIND TIMOTHY TURTLE

All day long Timothy Turtle stayed on the Beaver dam. And when the Beavers returned in the evening, to resume their work, they found Timothy still clinging to the box elder stick.

To Timothy Turtle's deep disgust the plump workers gathered round him and laughed. He could never bear to hear people laugh, laughing was so silly, he always said. And now Brownie Beaver laughed louder than all the rest.

"Look!" Brownie cried, pointing straight at Timothy Turtle. "Isn't he kind? He has stopped up that big hole for us all day. And now," Brownie added, turning to Timothy Turtle "now if you'll kindly stop

working for us and move aside we'll fill that hole that's right under you, with mud."

Timothy Turtle never felt more ashamed in all his long life. There he had been working all day long, helping the Beaver family by plugging a hole in their dam with his flat body, and he had never guessed what he was doing!

He let go of the stick and sank hastily in the pond, where the water was deepest, to bury himself in the soft bottom. And there he stayed and sulked for the rest of the week, until his visit was done. If he stuck his head out of the water now and then for a breath of air, he was careful to let no one see him.
He did not even bid the Beaver family good-by at the end of his visit, but left in the middle of the day, when everybody was sound asleep.

Grandaddy Beaver said it was no more than one could expect of a person so rude as Timothy Turtle.

"He was just like that in my great-grandfather's time," the old gentleman explained.

And all the rest of the villagers remarked that Timothy Turtle was old enough to have better manners. Certainly, they said, the youngest Beaver child knew better than to treat people in such a rude fashion.

Brownie Beaver's mother especially announced that she had never in all her life met a gentleman who had treated her so disrespectfully as old Mr. Turtle. And she grew red and pale by turns as she recalled how he had seized her by the tail and held her fast for a whole day.

"I hope," she said, "that by the time he comes here again he will have learned how to behave himself."

But Grandaddy Beaver shook his head.

"Timothy Turtle," he declared, "will be no different even if he lives to be a thousand years old."

And everybody said that it was a great pity.

XIII
THE PLOT

Of all the creatures that walked or swam or flew, Timothy Turtle liked boys the least of all. He said that if they ever did anything except throw stones he had never caught them at it.

"It's a wonder," he often remarked," it's a wonder that there's a stone left anywhere along this creek. I've lived here a good many years; and no boy ever spied me sunning myself on a rock in the water without trying to hit me."

Once in a great while some youngster was skillful enough to bounce a stone off Mr. Turtle's back.

And when the old scamp flopped into the water he always heard a great whooping from the bank. At such times as likely as not Timothy had been awakened from a sound sleep. But when that jeering noise greeted his ears he knew at once what had struck him.

It was a good thing for him that he had a hard back. Nevertheless it always made him angry to be disturbed when he was taking a nap. And some people said that if Timothy Turtle ever grabbed a boy by his great-toe, when he was in swimming, that youngster would limp for many a day thereafter.

But the boys went in swimming just the same. Black Creek would have had to be alive with turtles to keep them out of it on a hot summer's day. Indeed Farmer Green often said that he wished his son Johnnie would spend half the time in the hayfield that he wasted around the creek.

When questioned by his father, Johnnie said that there was an old turtle in Black Creek that he wanted to catch.

"What are you going to do with him—make soup of him?" Farmer Green inquired solemnly.

Johnnie shook his head.

"I want to cut my initials on his shell and let him go," he explained. "Then if I catch him again when I'm grown up I'll know him when I find him.... I'll put the date under my initials, too," Johnnie added.

Farmer Green laughed.

"When you're grown up," he said, "you'll have something else to do besides catching snapping turtles. This afternoon you may carve your initials on the hay-rake and then take it over to the big meadow and play with it."

For a few moments Johnnie Green couldn't help looking glum. He had intended to visit the creek that very afternoon. But now he knew that his father expected him to work—to work on one of the finest days of the whole summer!

"I'll let you off all day to-morrow," Farmer Green said. "And you know there's that calf I told you I'd give you if you helped me with the haying."

And then Johnnie actually smiled.

Well, the next morning was just as fine as the afternoon before. And Johnnie Green set off early for Black Creek, with his pockets stuffed full of cherries, because he was afraid he might get hungry. He ate a few of them on the way to the creek. But when he reached that delightful place he found something that made him forget what he had in his pockets. For there near the top of the bank, too far from the water to escape him, there lay Timothy Turtle himself, taking a sun-bath on the warm sand.

XIV
CAUGHT!

As soon as Johnnie Green saw Mr. Turtle he let out a loud whoop. And as soon as Mr. Turtle saw Johnnie, he scrambled up and made awkwardly for the water as fast as he could go.

But Timothy's fastest, on land, was so slow that Johnnie Green stopped him in two seconds.

Catching up a long stick, Johnnie thrust it in front of Timothy Turtle, who promptly seized it in his hooked jaws.

Johnnie Green couldn't help laughing at him.

"You're a stupid old fellow!" he cried.

"You could bite that stick all day and not hurt me."

But Timothy Turtle said never a word. He wished, however, that he could shift his grip to one of Johnnie's bare toes. He rather thought, if he could have done that, that Johnnie Green would give such a yell as had never before been heard in Pleasant Valley.

But Johnnie was careful. After catching Mr. Turtle he hardly knew what to do with him. All summer long Johnnie had kept his jackknife sharp as a razor, ready to carve his initials on Mr. Turtle's hard shell whenever the chance came. The knife was in his pocket. There was Mr. Turtle before him on the sand. And yet Johnnie was puzzled.

Close at hand his captive looked fiercer than he had appeared at a distance, lying on a rock in the creek. And his jaws had closed upon the stick in a vise-like hold. Johnnie winced when he tried to imagine how he would feel with Mr. Turtle fastened firmly to a toe or a finger.

It was not a pleasant thought. But Johnnie Green soon had a happier one: why not turn the old scamp over upon his back?

Johnnie had heard that a turtle was helpless when upset in that way. And he had already made up his mind to flop this one over when he realized that even with his captive upside down there was still a certain difficulty.

To be sure, Mr. Turtle couldn't walk away. But he could bite just the same. And how was a boy going to carve his initials on anybody's back, when that person was lying on it?

Johnnie Green saw that that plan wouldn't do at all. But he turned Timothy over, just for fun, upsetting him neatly by lifting him on the stick, for Timothy had not sense enough to let go of it in time to save himself.

Johnnie stayed there only long enough to make sure that Timothy Turtle was unable to move. And he soon decided that the savage old rascal would have to lie on his back until somebody came along and tipped him over. Then Johnnie Green scampered away.

To be sure, Mr. Turtle wriggled his legs, and twisted his neck about. But all his wiggling and twisting were of not the slightest help to him.

It was the first time in his long life that he had ever found himself in that position on land. And he was both frightened and angry.

Old Mr. Crow, who had a way of knowing when there was anything unusual going on, arrived in time to hear Timothy's remarks. And what he said about boys —and especially about Johnnie Green—made Mr. Crow catch his breath.

XV
THE REDSKINS' WAY

Of course Timothy Turtle was glad that Johnnie Green was gone. But he was far from happy, lying helpless on his back on the bank of Black Creek.

He told Mr. Crow that he hoped Johnnie would forget to come back again, a remark which made old Mr. Crow laugh. Being very wise, he saw at once that Timothy Turtle knew next to nothing about boys.

"I should think," Mr. Crow told Timothy, "you'd want Johnnie Green to return."

"Why?" Timothy snapped out his question in an angry tone, as he lay there upside down and stared at old Mr. Crow, who sat in a tree near-by.

"Well," Mr. Crow answered, "who'll set you on your feet again if he doesn't?"

"Don't you worry about me!" Timothy Turtle sneered. "I'll right myself as soon as there's a freshet. If there's a big enough rain the creek will rise as high as I am now. And nobody could keep me on my back in the water."

Old Mr. Crow actually snickered.

"You might have to wait till next spring for a freshet," he said cheerfully. "And what would you eat meanwhile?"

Having had a hearty meal of fish just before leaving the creek, Timothy Turtle hadn't once thought of eating. And naturally Mr. Crow's question troubled him. So he frowned frightfully. And he snapped his hooked jaws together, for he had to take something in his jaws and bite it, if it was no more than the air.

"I suppose," Mr. Crow remarked—"I suppose you would call that taking the air, eh?" And there was a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Go away!" Timothy Turtle growled.

But his guest declined to leave.

"There's likely to be some fun here," he thought, "and I don't intend to miss it."

If Timothy Turtle was surprised, Mr. Crow certainly was not, when a little later Johnnie Green and another boy whom he called "Red" (on account of his hair) came hurrying up to the spot where Timothy Turtle lay.

Upon the ground they dropped a number of things, such as pieces of rope, an old grain-sack, and an axe.

"Goodness!" said Mr. Crow to himself, as he looked on. "I'm glad I'm not Timothy Turtle. It appears to me that he's going to have a terrible time."

And Timothy himself seemed to think the same. He made savage passes at Johnnie and Red whenever they came near him. But they took good care to keep beyond his reach.

On the whole their captive behaved in a most foolish manner. Instead of drawing his head as far as he could into his shell, he thrust his neck out as far as it would go.

And that was exactly what the boys wanted him to do. Before Timothy Turtle—who was somewhat slow-witted—before he realized what their plan was, Johnnie Green and his friend Red had slipped one noose around his head and another around his body. And after turning their captive right side up they staked him out upon the sand so that he could not move.

"There!" Johnnie Green cried when they had Timothy Turtle where they wanted him. "That's the way the Redskins do with their enemies."

And his friend the red-haired boy danced something that might have been an Indian war dance.

Anyhow, neither old Mr. Crow nor Timothy Turtle had ever seen anything like it.

XVI
JOHNNIE GREEN'S INITIALS

Timothy Turtle found himself in a very uncomfortable position, staked out as he was on the bank of Black Creek, with one rope about his body and another about his neck.

And even then Johnnie Green was not satisfied. Though his friend Red insisted that their captive could do them no harm saying, "How can he bite when he can't move his head?" Johnnie Green replied that he would "fix him" so there couldn't possibly be any accident. And taking the old grain-sack he had brought back with him, he wrapped it carefully around Timothy's head, till he looked for all the world as if he had the earache.

"There!" Johnnie Green said, when he had finished. "He'll have to bite through that bag before he bites us; and I guess he'll find he has a pretty big mouthful."

Then he pulled out his jackknife and felt its sharp edge with his thumb.

"Lemme do it for you!" Red begged him, holding out his hand for the knife.

But Johnnie Green had no such idea.

"No!" he said firmly. "I've got to cut my initials myself."

"He might get loose and grab you," the red-haired boy remarked hopefully.

But Johnnie Green told him that he would risk that.

"Which way are you going to cut them?" Red asked him.

"What do you mean?" Johnnie inquired.

"Are you going to make 'em read when he's going or coming?" Red explained.

"I hadn't thought of that," Johnnie Green replied. "But I guess going would be better. Then if he stands up you can read 'em just the same, without any trouble."

So Johnnie kneeled down beside Timothy Turtle. It took him some time to decide just where he would carve his initials on Timothy's shell. And he had about decided that the best place to put his mark on Mr. Turtle's back would be exactly in the middle of it, when he cried all at once, "Look, Red! Look!"

"Whassamatter?" the red-haired boy wanted to know.

"This is the queerest thing I ever heard of!" Johnnie exclaimed. "Here are my initials already cut!"

Red could not believe him, until he had peered at Timothy's shell himself. And then he saw that what Johnnie had said was true.

"There's a date, too," Johnnie pointed out. And he read it aloud. "That's more'n thirty years ago," he declared.

But the red-haired boy laughed boisterously.

"Shucks!" he jeered. "Somebody's been playin' a joke on you. Somebody knew you were lookin' for this old turtle and put your initials and that old date on him just to puzzle you."

Johnnie Green didn't know exactly what to think. But probably he was no more upset than was Timothy Turtle, who was not having a good time at all.

"I don't care if some one did catch this turtle first," Johnnie said at last. "I'm going to carve my mark on him just the same."

So he began to cut "J. G." in the exact center of the back of Timothy Turtle, much to that old fellow's rage.

And when Johnnie Green had finished the letters he cut the date below them.

"What you goin' to do with him now?" Red asked Johnnie then.

"Turn him loose!" Johnnie replied.

"Aw, don't do that! Lemme have him!" Red coaxed.

Johnnie Green said that he was sorry—but he intended to set his captive free, just as he had planned. He soon found that turning Mr. Turtle loose was no easy matter. Strange to say, Timothy Turtle did nothing to help. On the contrary, he made the task as hard as he could for Johnnie Green, trying his best to bite that young man.

In the end Johnnie had to cut the rope that held Timothy's head. And when that furious old fellow at last found himself in Black Creek once more he still wore a noose of rope, like a collar, around his neck.

When Johnnie Green told his father about his adventure with Timothy Turtle, he had a great surprise. Farmer Green said that when he was just about Johnnie's age he had cut his initials on a turtle, down by the creek.

Now, since Johnnie was named for his father, their initials had to be alike. So the J. G.—and the old date—that Johnnie had found must have been carved by Farmer Green when he was a youngster.

Somehow, Johnnie found it very hard to imagine that his father had ever been a boy like himself and had spent his time playing near the creek, and carving his initials on the back of a turtle.

"How old do you suppose that turtle is?" he asked his father.

"Oh, he must be a regular old settler," Farmer Green declared. "He may have been around here when your grandfather was a boy, for all I know."

"Do you really believe that?" Johnnie exclaimed.

"Well," his father answered, "there's only one way to find out."

"What's that?" Johnnie inquired eagerly.

"Ask Mr. Turtle himself," Farmer Green replied with a smile.

XVII
TIMOTHY NEEDS HELP

Everybody who lived near Black Creek noticed Timothy Turtle's new collar. And almost every one, being curious, asked Mr. Turtle where he got it, and why he was wearing it.

Now, Timothy Turtle would give such folk no answer at all. But old Mr. Crow knew what had happened—of course. And he took pains to tell all his friends how Johnnie Green had caught Timothy and tied a rope around his neck, and cut something on Timothy's back, besides.

So it was not long before Timothy Turtle's neighbors began to ask him what was on his back.

"My shell's on my back!" he snapped, when any one put that question to him.

"Yes, but what's on your shell?" everybody was sure to answer back.

Timothy Turtle couldn't have replied to that question, even if he had wanted to. And though he always sneered when hearing it and turned his head away, as if the matter was something he didn't care to talk about, there was nobody who was any more eager to know the answer than he.

To be sure, by raising his head he could get a slanting view of the top of his shell. But such a glimpse was not enough to tell him anything.

Under the constant inquiries of his neighbors Timothy's curiosity grew every day. Soon he took to staring at his reflection in the surface of the water, with the hope that he might be able to see his back in that way.

But it was all in vain. Though Timothy twisted and turned and stretched his long neck, he couldn't see his own back, no matter how much he tried.

Now, there was an ill-mannered scamp named Peter Mink who happened to go prowling up the creek one day. And as he quietly rounded a bend he came upon an odd sight.

In front of him, and perched on a rock in the midst of the water, Timothy Turtle was going through the queerest motions. He seemed to be peering into the water at something, while wriggling about in a most peculiar fashion.

He did not notice Peter Mink, who stood stock still and watched him for some time without speaking. At last Peter's prying ways got the better of him. He simply had to say something.

"What on earth are you doing!" he called to Timothy.

Mr. Turtle gave a great start.

Timothy was going through the queerest motions.

"I'm looking at myself—that's all," he said. He was so surprised that for once he actually answered a question politely.

His reply amused Peter Mink. And that ill-bred rascal laughed right in Timothy Turtle's face.

"Time must hang heavy on your hands, if you can't find anything pleasanter to do than that," he remarked—for Peter Mink never cared how rude he was. In fact he liked to make unkind remarks. "Aren't you afraid," he added, "that you'll wear out the surface of the creek, gazing into it? I shouldn't like that very well," said Peter Mink, "because then it couldn't freeze in winter, and you know t's great sport to hunt muskrats under the ice."

Well, Peter's speech alarmed Timothy Turtle. And yet he felt that he could not rest until he knew what was on his back. So he asked Peter Mink to meet him on the bank.

"I want you to help me," he said. "I have reason to believe that there's something written on my back. And you must tell me what it is."

XVIII
PETER MINK'S PLAN

Now Peter Mink had never learned to read. In the first place, he had never had a chance to learn. And in the second, he was such a good-for-nothing rascal that he wouldn't have gone to school anyhow.

But he did not tell all this to Timothy Turtle. When he stepped behind Timothy and gazed at his back, Peter Mink thought of a fine way to tease the old fellow.

Of course, he had not the slightest idea what those marks on Mr. Turtle's shell meant. But he looked down at them with a wise smile.

Mr. Turtle, watching Peter out of the corner of his eye, saw that smile; and he did not like it in the least. In fact, it made him feel quite peevish.

"Well, what do you see?" he asked Peter Mink impatiently.

"Ah!" Peter Mink replied with a shake of his small head. "I'm not going to tell you, Mr. Turtle. I don't want to hurt your feelings. And if I were to explain that your back says you're a disagreeable, mean old scamp, you know you'd be very angry."

Peter Mink jumped out of the way just in time. For Timothy Turtle wheeled with amazing swiftness and snapped at his tormentor.

"Don't do that!" Peter cried. "I didn't say anything about you, Mr. Turtle."

"You'd better not," Timothy warned him. "And if Johnnie Green carved any such words as those on my shell I don't know what to do. I certainly don't want to carry them about with me for the rest of my life." He looked unhappy, to say the least. He knew that

probably he would live a great many years longer. And he was puzzled.

"Why don't you get a new shell?" Peter Mink inquired.

"I'd hate to do that," Timothy Turtle told him. "I've had this one a long time; and it fits me perfectly."

"Then why don't you get the well-known tailor, Mr. Ferdinand Frog, to make you a coat that will cover your back? If you did that, nobody could see what's on your shell."

"A good idea!" Timothy Turtle exclaimed. "I'll see Mr. Frog at once. And some day I'll do something handsome for you, because you've been a great help to me."

"Why wait?" Peter Mink demanded. "Why don't you do it now?" Knowing that Timothy was stingy, Peter thought that the old gentleman would soon change his mind about "doing something handsome" for him.

"No!" Timothy Turtle declared. "I want to wait a while and think it over."

"Well, then," Peter Mink urged him, "why don't you crawl under that shelving rock and think it over right now?"

"You ask too many questions," Mr. Turtle told him. "And besides, I must hurry away and find Ferdinand Frog. I want my new coat as soon as I can get it. And the longer I stay here, the more time I shall lose." So in spite of all Peter Mink could say, Timothy slipped into Black Creek and swam away.

XIX
CAREFUL MR. FROG

Somebody had knocked. And with a wide smile upon his face Mr. Ferdinand Frog, the tailor, went to his door and peeped out.

One look was enough. He shut the door again with great haste and barred it. And he held one hand over his heart, as if he had just received a terrible fright.

"Let me in!" somebody called. The tailor knew that it was Timothy Turtle's voice, for he had seen that crusty old person standing upon his doorstep.

"Go away!" Mr. Frog replied. "I'm not here."

He was an odd chap—this Ferdinand Frog. One never could tell what he was going to do—or say.

"Yes, you are!" Timothy Turtle insisted. "I saw you only a moment ago."

The tailor then peered out of the window at his caller.

"There you are now!" Timothy shouted, as he caught sight of Mr. Frog. "I say, let me in!"

"I can't," Mr. Frog answered. "I'm sick a-bed."

"Nonsense!" Timothy cried.

"Well, I expect I'll be ill if you don't go away," the tailor answered. "I'm having a nervous chill this very moment."

He was afraid of Timothy Turtle. And it was no wonder. For Timothy had tried, more than once to make a meal of the nimble Mr. Frog.

"I haven't come here to hurt you," Timothy Turtle explained, trying to smile at the face in the window. "I want you to make me a new coat—a big one that will cover my back all over."

To his great disappointment Mr. Frog shook his head with great force.

"I'm not interested," he announced.

"Let me in!" said Timothy to Mr. Frog.

"Do you mean"—Timothy Turtle faltered—"do you mean that you won't make a coat for me?"

"Exactly!"

"Why?" Timothy pressed him.

"Too busy!" was Mr. Frog's answer.

"Who is?"

"You are!" said Mr. Frog. "Ever since I've known you, you've been trying to catch me and my friends."

"Why. . . er, I was only joking," Timothy Turtle told him. "You mustn't mind my playful ways. Just make me a coat and I'll do something handsome for you."

It was now the tailor's turn to ask questions.

"What," he inquired," what will you do?"

"I couldn't just say at this moment," Timothy replied.

"Why not?"

"Oh, I'd want to think a while," said Timothy Turtle.

"Very well!" was the tailor's answer. "I've no objection, though it's something I never do myself."

"I wish you'd come outside a moment, since you don't want me inside your shop," Timothy remarked. "I'd like to whisper to you."

"I'm deaf," Mr. Frog informed him. "I couldn't hear a single word, even if you were to shout your head off."

"You can hear what I'm saying now well enough," Timothy pointed out. "I read the lips," said Mr. Frog with a snicker.

That speech made Timothy Turtle start.

"Then if you can read my lips, no doubt you can read what's on my back," he said.

"That's easy," the tailor observed. "Your shell's on your back, of course."

Timothy Turtle glanced up with a look of scorn.

"Don't be silly!" he snapped. "I mean, can you read what's carved on my shell?"

"Certainly!" Mr. Frog replied. And he began to mutter, as if to himself, "J. G., that means just grumpy, of course,"

Timothy Turtle interrupted him quickly.

"I don't care to hear any more," he screamed. And turning away, he waddled towards the water.

"That Ferdinand Frog has no manners," he spluttered. "I only wish he wasn't quite so spry." And Mr. Turtle looked very fierce as he snapped his jaws together.

XX
THE ALMANAC

One rainy night Peter Mink stopped at Black Creek; and calling loudly to Timothy Turtle he asked for a place to sleep.

"You remember," he said, when Timothy drew himself upon the bank, "you told me that you would do something handsome for me some time. And now that I'm wet and tired I hope you can offer me a snug, dry spot in which to spend the night."

"What can you do to pay me?" asked Timothy Turtle. He never did anything for anybody without pay.

"Can you saw wood?"

Now, Peter Mink would rather stay out in the rain forever than saw a single stick of wood. So he said:

"No, I can't!" just like that.

"Well, it's about time you learned," said Timothy Turtle.

Peter Mink was about to leave in disgust; and he was wondering what name he would call Timothy Turtle, when he was a little further away, when he noticed that Timothy had a thin book in his hand.

"What's that?" Peter asked.

"It's the Farmer's Almanac," said Timothy Turtle. "I've been looking through it; but my eyes are bad and I can't read."

Now that was quite true; for Timothy's eyes were bad—and he had never learned to read.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," Peter Mink announced.

"If you'll give me a place to spend the night I'll read the Farmer's Almanac to you."

"Come right in!" Timothy Turtle cried, leading the way to a cozy nook beneath a big rock which was not

far from the water. And Peter Mink was very glad to creep inside that comfortable shelter. He took the Almanac from Timothy Turtle and they both sat down. Peter opened the book.

"I see," he said, "that it says the weather was fair to-day, but look out for a heavy rain to-night!"

Now, Timothy Turtle had not felt quite sure that Peter Mink knew how to read. But when he heard that he quickly changed his mind.

"That's exactly what's happened!" he exclaimed. And he was greatly pleased.

But the next moment he noticed that Peter Mink was holding the book upside down. Timothy could tell that because the picture of the man ploughing, on the cover, was upside down.

"You can't read!" he cried angrily. "You don't even know how to hold a book. You've got it bottom side up!"

But Peter Mink only smiled pleasantly at him.

"You don't understand," he said. "That's the way I was taught to read. Then, if you want to read when

standing on your head, you don't need to turn the book over.... It's the latest method," he explained.

"Oh!" said Timothy Turtle. "That's different!"

"Yes—quite different!" said Peter Mink.

"What does the Almanac say about next week?" Timothy inquired.

"Time to plant corn!" Peter told him.

"That's so!" said Timothy Turtle. "Mr. Crow was telling me this very day that Farmer Green was ploughing his cornfield; but of course that doesn't interest me much.... What else does the book say?" Timothy continued.

"Well, here's some general advice," Peter Mink remarked, as he looked at the Almanac again. "It says:

'If anybody comes to you and asks for a place to sleep, give him a bed—but first of all, give him a good supper.'"

"I don't believe I want to hear any more tonight," said Timothy Turtle hastily. "It's late; so we'd better go to bed right away."

Peter Mink was somewhat disappointed. He had hoped to get a fish or two to eat. But there was nothing he could say, though he did wish Timothy Turtle could take a hint.

"In the morning you can read to me again," Timothy told him.

So they went to bed.

But in the morning the Almanac was nowhere to be found. Timothy Turtle hunted for it in every place he could think of—except Peter Mink's pocket.

After Peter had gone, Timothy continued his search. And at last he found the Almanac beneath the heap of dry leaves which Peter Mink had used for a bed.

"That's queer!" Timothy Turtle said. "I'm almost sure I looked there before Peter Mink went away.... My eyes must be growing worse."

The more he thought of the matter, the gladder he was that he hadn't found the book before. For there was no knowing but that Peter Mink might have found

some advice about giving a good breakfast to a guest who stayed over night.

Then Timothy Turtle went into Black Creek and caught a fine fish, for he was hungry. And he enjoyed his meal mightily, because he had it all to himself.

While he was eating he kept thinking what a disagreeable fellow Peter Mink was. No doubt he would have been surprised had he known that Peter Mink was thinking the same thing about him, at exactly the same moment.

XXI
A QUEER WISH

Fishing was one of Timothy Turtle's favorite sports. He was a skillful fisherman, too. And though it only happened once that he caught more than one fish at a time, on that occasion he captured seven. This was the way it happened:

Johnnie Green had come to Black Creek to fish for pickerel. And Timothy Turtle was much annoyed when he found Johnnie fishing in the pool that he liked best of all. Timothy thought it was mean of Johnnie Green to catch his fish, in his creek.

And Timothy's beady eyes glared as he watched Johnnie from a safe hiding-place under the bank.

He saw that Johnnie Green was a good fisherman. Before he moved on he caught three big fish from that pool; and one of them—the biggest of the three—was the very fish on which Timothy Turtle had been expecting to dine that day.

It was really no wonder that he was annoyed. And when Johnnie went further up the creek to try his luck elsewhere Timothy Turtle slipped into the water and followed him.

The more fish he saw Johnnie Green catch, the angrier Timothy grew. And he went out of his way to tell a number of his neighbors what was happening.

"Something ought to be done about it!" he complained.

"Why don't you go down and speak to Farmer Green?" Peter Mink suggested.

Peter liked fish, too. And he had often said that Johnnie had no right to take food away from him, when everybody knew that there was a plenty at the farmhouse.

Timothy Turtle did not care for Peter's suggestion.

"I've no time to waste talking to Farmer Green," he said. "It seems to me a letter would be better. Now, if somebody would write a letter, and get everybody to sign his name to it, and send it down to Farmer Green by a messenger, I would do my share to help. I would tell the messenger where to leave the letter so that Farmer Green would be sure to find it." Timothy then said that he must hurry back to the creek, for he wanted to see how many fish Johnnie Green took, so the number could be mentioned in the letter. But before he left Timothy told Peter Mink to go and find somebody to write the letter. "There's old Mr. Crow," Timothy said. "You might ask him. He could use one of his quills for a pen, you know."

When Timothy Turtle reached the creek once more he found that while he was talking to Peter Mink, Johnnie Green had moved oh again.

So Timothy started to follow him. But what should he see, lying on the bank right before him, but a

string of seven pickerel! Johnnie Green had left them there, while he went still further up the creek to catch more.

Timothy Turtle suddenly changed his mind about sending a letter to Farmer Green. He wished that Johnnie would come there to fish every day.

"He's a kind boy, after all!" said Timothy Turtle to himself. "I never dreamed that he was catching these fish for me. But here they are, waiting for me! For Johnnie must have known that I would find them."

Timothy Turtle didn't say anything more. Of course he was only talking to himself, anyhow. And he seized the string of pickerel and waddled into the bushes, where he ate every one of those seven fish.

When Peter Mink met Timothy the next day he said he had not yet found anybody who would write the letter to Farmer Green.

"Mr. Crow told me that if it was anybody but you he might be willing to pull out one of his quills for a pen," Peter explained. "But he said that he hoped

Johnnie Green would come here every day to fish, until there are no fish left for you."

Timothy Turtle sniffed.

"You go back," he directed Peter Mink, "and tell Mr. Crow that I hope Johnnie Green will come here twice a day until he has caught every fish in Black Creek."

Peter Mink thought that that was a queer thing for Timothy to wish. Neither he nor old Mr. Crow could understand it.

XXII
THE UNWELCOME GUEST

Ferdinand Frog did not like Timothy Turtle. But he always said he thought Mr. Turtle could be trusted.

"You can depend on him," Mr. Frog often remarked. "Yes, you can depend on him to grab you if he ever gets a chance."

And all the rest of the musical Frog family agreed with him.

It is not surprising, therefore, that they never invited Timothy Turtle to attend their singing parties in Cedar Swamp. It made no difference how much Timothy Turtle hinted. Though he frequently took pains

to tell Ferdinand Frog how fond he was of music, Mr. Frog never once asked him to come to a concert.

In private Mr. Frog and his friends often spoke of Mr. Turtle and giggled. And one of the Frog family even made up a song about Timothy Turtle, which the whole company loved to chant in Cedar Swamp, safe —as they thought—from Timothy's snapping jaws.

But one fine summer's evening they had a great surprise. They had scarcely begun their nightly concert when Timothy Turtle appeared, out of the water and crawled upon an old stump, right in their midst.

"Good evening!" he cried. "I was just passing on my way home; and hearing the singing, I thought I'd stop and enjoy it."

For a few moments none of the Frog family said a word. And then Ferdinand Frog spoke up and asked Mr. Turtle a question:

"Have you had your dinner?"

"No, I haven't," Timothy answered. "But you needn't trouble yourselves on my account. Go on with

your singing. And if I feel faint no doubt I can find a bite to eat hereabouts."

Now, Mr. Turtle hoped that his speech would put the singers quite at their ease. But they looked at one another and rolled their eyes as if to say, "This Timothy Turtle is a dangerous person. Look out for him!"

At the same time they did not wish to appear frightened. And Ferdinand Frog's mother's uncle even made a short speech, saying that he hoped Mr. Turtle would enjoy the singing half as much as everybody else enjoyed his company.

He was about to make some further remark. But no one knew what. For Timothy Turtle wheeled about to look at the old gentleman. And the moment Timothy moved, Ferdinand Frog's mother's uncle jumped hastily into the water from the hummock where he had been sitting, and swam away.

The rest of the company then sang a song. And their listener said that he had never heard anything like it.

"I wish you'd sing it again," he said, "with your mouths open and your eyes shut."

But the musical Frog family objected that they were not used to singing in that fashion.

"Why don't you keep your own eyes shut?" Ferdinand Frog asked Mr. Turtle. "Then you wouldn't know whether ours were open or closed."

"Let us all shut our eyes!" Timothy Turtle then suggested. And when the Frog family began another song, a few of the younger and more foolish singers followed Mr. Turtle's advice.

So, too, did Mr. Turtle himself—for a few moments.

But he soon opened his eyes slyly. And he became very angry when he saw that most of the singers were watching him.

"You aren't doing as I asked you!" he shouted.

XXIII
A MERRY SONG

Timothy Turtle made such a noise that the Frog family had to stop singing.

"It's not fair!" he cried. "You're peeping!"

"Well, so are you!" Ferdinand Frog retorted.

"I only opened my eyes to make sure that you were doing as I asked you to," Mr. Turtle replied with an injured air.

"And we didn't shut ours, because we wanted to watch you," said Mr. Frog.

"Can't you trust me?" Timothy snapped.

"Certainly!" Ferdinand Frog replied.

"Oh, yes! We can trust you!" And he winked at his friends.

"You don't want to hurt my feelings, do you?" Timothy Turtle went on.

"No, indeed!" everybody exclaimed.

And then Ferdinand Frog told Timothy that they would sing a special song in his honor.

"Fire away!" Timothy ordered them. And the whole company knew, when he said that, that if he really cared anything at all for singing he never would have spoken of it in that fashion.

They were just about to begin the song when Timothy Turtle stopped them.

"What's this thing called?" he demanded.

"It's known," Ferdinand Frog explained, "as 'A Merry Song.'"

And then the whole Frog family began to bellow their loudest:

Come let us sing a merry song!
To you it may sound sad.
And if you think it loud and long
We think that it's not bad.
"We'll sing about a grumpy one
Who snaps and bites all day.
And if you call that "having fun"
We make reply, "Go 'way!"
He has a glittering, wicked eye
And also cruel jaws.
And if you ask the reason why,
We'll answer you, "Because!"
He'll stretch his neck and grab you quick—
Don't let him come too near!
And if you poke him with a stick
He'll seize that too—oh, dear!

Now, we'll admit he swims quite well
And that he's slow ashore.
Don't ask us if he wears a shell
Until we tell you more.
Don't ask us if he's fond of fish
Nor seek to learn his age.
And kindly don't express a wish
To see him in a rage!
Don't ask us if his claws are strong
And if he has a tail.
It might be short and blunt, or long
And pointed like a nail.
We do not want to cause you pain.
We would not give offense—
But, sir, you'll not come here again
If you have any sense.

After the last echo of the song had lost itself in the depths of Cedar Swamp, the singers all turned, smiling, to their listener.

But his face wore no smile. On the contrary, Timothy Turtle frowned darkly.

"You can't fool me!" he cried. "You don't like me! You don't want me here!"

Ferdinand Frog swallowed a few times.

"Well," said he, "of course my manners are so elegant that I simply couldn't dispute one of my elders. And anyhow, Mr. Turtle, you'd find that our singing sounded twice as well if you were half a mile away."

"It certainly couldn't sound any worse than it does here," Timothy Turtle declared—a remark which made the Frog family grin broadly.

He said no more, but slipped into the water and struck out towards home.

There was a lively scattering of those who found themselves in Timothy Turtle's path. And for a time it looked as if the singing party had broken up in disorder.

But after a while everybody came back again—that is, everybody but Timothy Turtle. He hurried away and spent most of the whole night buried in the mud at the bottom of Black Creek. For even until daybreak that merry song came floating now and then across Pleasant Valley.

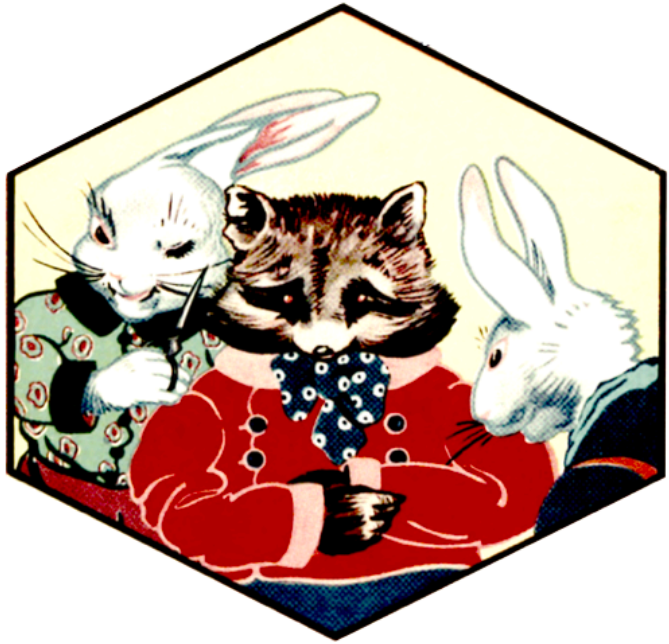
And Timothy Turtle did not like it. He thought it not only loud and long, but most unpleasant as well.

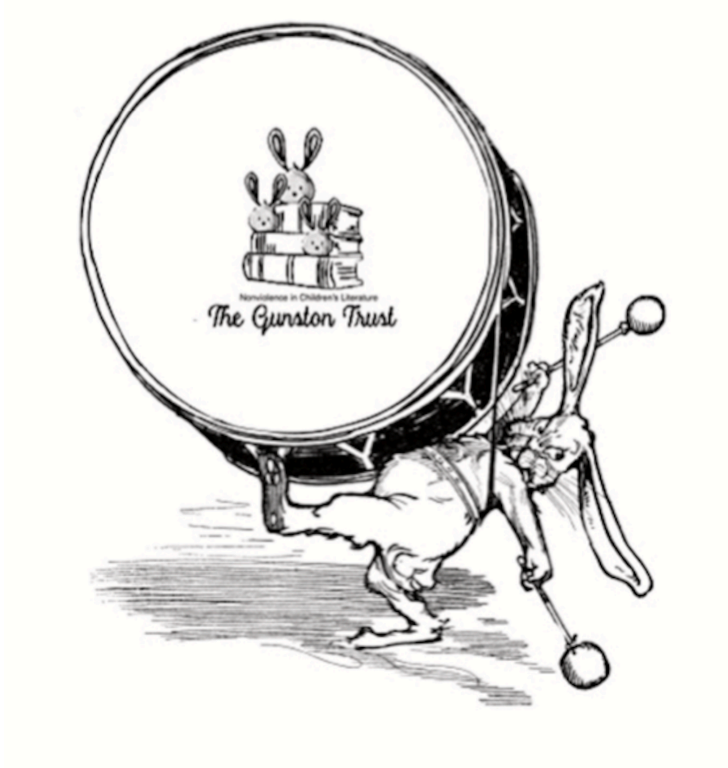
THE END

SLEEPY-TIME TALES

Arthur Scott Bailey

These little books for little people tell of the adventures of the four-footed creatures of our American woods and fields in an amusing way which delights small two-footed human beings; and at the same time, in the shortcomings of Jimmy Rabbit, Fatty Coon, Tommy Fox, Billy Woodchuck and their neighbors, children are quick to recognize their own faults and to take home the obvious lessons.

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